

VZCZCXRO2476  
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK  
DE RUEHGB #2795/01 2441313  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 311313Z AUG 08  
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9144  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 002795

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/31/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: PRT ANBAR: ANBAR PROVINCE ON THE EVE OF PIC

Classified By: PRT Team Leader James Soriano for  
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) This is a PRT Anbar reporting cable.

Summary

12. (C) Security responsibility in Anbar Province is scheduled to be transferred from the Coalition Forces (CF) to Iraqi national and provincial authorities in a ceremony in Ramadi on September 1. Called Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC), the event is a milestone marking the transition to the period of post-conflict recovery. Among the factors contributing to tipping the province in our favor are the turn of public opinion against Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), the phenomenon of tribal mobilization, the increase in police recruitment, and the effectiveness of combined operations between CF and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). Challenges in the period ahead are formidable. The province is not yet out of the woods on the security front and has a litany of economic woes, especially regarding basic services. On the political front, local entities are forming to challenge the dominance of the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) over the Provincial Council (PC), and deep distrust of the GOI is widely held among provincial notables. Nonetheless, both the PRT and MNF-West see the period ahead as an opportunity to strengthen the gains made on the security front. In an increasingly permissive environment, we will be moving forward with a series of economic and governance initiatives as highlighted in our Joint Common Plan. End Summary.

Provincial Iraqi Control

13. (C) In a ceremony scheduled to take place in Ramadi in the next few days, Anbar Governor Ma'amoun Sami Rasheed will sign a memorandum of understanding with the Commanding General of MNF-West documenting the transfer of responsibility for local security from CF to Iraqi national and provincial authority. The transfer, officially called Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC), is a milestone marking the transition of Anbar Province from the days of a violent insurgency into the period of post-conflict reconstruction.

14. (C) The PIC ceremony takes place against a backdrop of continuing security improvements. To be sure, AQI cells are still at large and looking for openings, but overall the level of violence has declined dramatically in the past 20 months. There were only 79 security incidents recorded throughout the province in July, and August's tally is on track to be even lower. This compares to the 1,700 to 2,000 monthly security incidents typically experienced in the fall of 2006 during the height of the Battle for Anbar.

15. (SBU) It was at that time that an internal MNF-West intelligence assessment found that the "the social and political situation has deteriorated to a point" that combined CF and ISF "are no longer capable of militarily defeating the insurgency in al-Anbar" (Washington Post November 28, 2006).

## Then and Now

-----

16. (SBU) That was then. Today the changes on the local scene are remarkable:

-- Two years ago, the insurgency knocked Anbar's provincial and municipal governments into disarray or forced them underground. Under threat, the Provincial Council (PC) fled to the relative safety of Baghdad and many local councils disbanded. But as security improved in 2007, the PC returned to its traditional seat of power in Ramadi that summer. Today, virtually every city and town has a mayor and a functioning municipal council.

-- In the summer of 2006, there were several hundred Iraqi Police (IP) on the provincial roles, and recruitment drives were lucky to attract two dozen applicants. Several urban areas had no IP at all. Today, there are 28,000 IP on the rolls, and every city and town has a functioning police force.

-- Two years ago, many of the tribes were ambivalent towards CF or aligned against us. Today, tribal leaders are openly cooperative and some have begun to organize as political parties. Local citizens who previously shunned contact with CF today openly socialize with them.

-- Two years ago, the criminal court system ceased functioning because of insurgent threats. Today, criminal courts are in session and even hear terrorism-related cases.

BAGHDAD 00002795 002 OF 003

-- Two years ago, there was little financial and policy support from the GOI - GOI financing for capital projects was minimal or nil. Today, the flow of GOI financial resources has resumed, giving the province the wherewithal for badly needed improvements.

-- During the insurgency, many mosques typically spewed forth calls for insurrection. Today, moderate religious teachers have resumed their places. They actively discourage extremism and several of them are on tap to participate in an inter-faith dialogue visit to the U.S.

-- Two years ago, the insurgency disrupted normal economic and social life. Parents kept their children home from school, many businesses were shuttered, and the highways were unsafe for travel. Today, markets are open and economic and social life is returning to normal.

## Four Factors

-----

17. (C) Anbar Province is moving in the right direction. With hindsight, analysts will sift through the data for causal explanations, but at this stage four key factors, interacting among themselves, seem to have tipped the battlefield in our favor.

-- The first factor was the turn of public opinion against AQI. A psychological breakthrough took place in 2006-07. The public re-defined AQI as the enemy and CF as friendly, or at least not as the enemy. AQI's excesses ) its murder and intimidation of local notables ) had much to do with the shift in sentiment, but the mosques also played a role. Still inadequately understood by outsiders, the mosque, which fomented insurrection in 2004-05, became a voice of moderation in 2006-07.

-- Second is the well-known story of tribal mobilization and MNF-West's success in supporting it. Starting in Al-Qaim in 2005-06, tribal leaders gradually built ties with local MNF-West units. However, the best known example is the Anbar

Awakening Council, founded by the late Sheikh Sattar Abu Risha and a group of like-minded tribal leaders in the Ramadi area in September 2006.

-- Third, as noted above, there was the increase in police recruitment. In hindsight, it is clear that they filled the power vacuum of 2003-06 that had allowed AQI to move about unimpeded in the province.

-- Finally, there was the effectiveness of combined CF and IP and military operations. The CF's staying power bought time until local security forces and local government could get on their feet. The other factors - the turn of public opinion, tribal mobilization, and the increase in police recruitment - did not happen merely because of a spark of local initiative. They happened because CF made them happen.

#### The Post-Conflict Environment

-----

¶18. (C) Although positive trends continue, Anbar is still not out of the woods. AQI's capabilities may be diminished, but the enemy is still present. A June suicide attack near Fallujah that killed three Marines and 14 Anbaris is a reminder of the continuing threat. Looking ahead, the challenges are formidable. The economic woes are well-known and similar to those elsewhere in the country. However, there are two challenges that bear close monitoring.

¶19. (C) The first is the local political scene. The Iraq Awakening Conference, or Muattamar Sahawa Al-Iraq (MSI), is the chief opposition party, and has long sought to oust the governing Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) from its dominant position. At stake is the control of the PC, patronage, and financial resources.

¶110. (C) The IIP is an off-shoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. It is chiefly urban in character, attracts technocrats to its ranks, and ambivalent, if not hostile, to the CF occupation. By contrast, the MSI has a power base among tribal leaders. It denounces parties with a religious affiliation and publicly supports CF, referring to them as "friendly forces" in public pronouncements.

¶11. (C) Since 2006, the MSI (and its predecessor organizations) have denounced the PC as illegitimate, having been formed by the IIP on the slender reed of the widely boycotted 2005 election. In that poll, only 3,700 votes were cast in a population of 1.4 million, with the IIP garnering some 2,700 votes.

BAGHDAD 00002795 003 OF 003

¶12. (SBU) The low turnout took place when Anbar was estranged from the national political process and voters heeded calls for an election boycott. The situation is different today. At least 34 political entities are registered to contest the next election, and over 326,000 citizens, some 44 percent of the eligible voters, have registered to vote. Both the MSI and IIP are eyeing election strategies.

#### Provincial-GOI Relations

-----

¶13. (C) Regardless which party emerges on top, it will be faced with managing the often dysfunctional relationship between Ramadi and Baghdad. Anbaris are deeply suspicious of the GOI. They fear Shi'a overreach, and many see an Iranian hand behind a plot to dominate the province. Such perceptions and fears shape local attitudes and behaviors, as seen in Anbar's 2005 national election boycott. Feeding those anxieties is a list of local grievances against the GOI. Anbaris see a constant stream of empty GOI promises and arbitrary decisions. There have been the non-payment and inadequate logistical support for the police, border

corruption and security, and the ongoing local concerns over the Article 140 motion purporting to detach a large swath of eastern Anbar and assign it to Karbala province. More recently, there was the drama of the PIC process itself. Originally set for late June, the transfer of security was delayed so as to give local officials time to iron out differences with the GOI. Those differences, on security matters at least, were settled with the signing August 21 of an MOU between the GOI and the Governor detailing the Command and Control (C2) of Iraqi Security Forces in Anbar.

What the PRT is Doing About It

¶14. (C) As the local environment continues to improve, the PRT is partnered with MNF-West in moving forward on such initiatives as budget execution, economic development, agriculture, and rule of law. We have more opportunities for contact with Anbaris than ever before, and those opportunities appear to be growing. In general, the Anbaris, especially those in government, are supportive of our efforts and see a continuing need for USG technical assistance and support in the future. The combined objectives of the PRT and MNF-West seek to exploit this favorable situation and to deepen the gains made in the one-third of Iraq's land area called Anbar province.

BUTENIS